

WE ARE PUBLIC HEALTH

BY CALIFORNIA'S LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS

BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEES VOICE SUPPORT FOR PUBLICHERO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMS

Latest updates in this issue:

- **Legislative Leaders Voice Support for PublicHERO Workforce Development and Training Programs - 1**
- **Public Health Leaders Urge Legislature to Reject Governors Proposal to Slash \$49.8M in PublicHERO Workforce Programs - 2**

During recent Senate and Assembly Budget Subcommittees on Health and Human Services hearings discussing the Future of Public Health Funding and PublicHERO training programs, subcommittee members overwhelmingly voiced strong support and renewed their strong commitment to investing to rebuild our local public health infrastructure and workforce.

- "I hope you hear the support we have for continued public health investments as we must be prepared with the workforce for tomorrow," stated **Assemblymember Dr. Joaquin Aramubla, Asm Subcommittee No. 1 Chair.**
- "I can't think of any worse way to be prepared for the next pandemic than cutting our workforce training programs and our workforce investments. We were already struggling with workforce in public health before the pandemic. We've had significant burnout. In a couple of my counties we've had multiple public health directors, huge turnovers in staff, and so the idea of not continuing to fund workforce is penny-wise and pound-foolish," said **Assemblymember Jim Wood.**
- "I'm reminded of reports we continue to see; obviously, California will be facing more frequent pandemics and public health emergencies," said **Assemblymember Dr. Corey Jackson.** "I know for sure [that cutting PublicHERO funds] is not something I'm supportive of... I think it would be bad public policy, bad budgeting for the public to agree to such cuts."

- "I don't think this is a good idea at all. Workforce is all we've been talking about. The lack of our pipeline. Sounds like we want to close our pipeline, we want to rip the rungs off of our ladder. All the things we've worked to develop that we're just going to undo," said **Senator Susan Eggman**. "So I would suggest to the Department of Finance there might be some other places that we can cut... The more pathways, the opportunities they have, the more training they get, the more they are happy in their jobs and they stay...I vote for reversion of the reversion."
- "[The] intent of the subcommittee is to protect the workforce. Echo my colleague, in saying that's exactly what we will do in protecting this pipeline and we will have more conversation on that," said **Senator Caroline Menjivar, Senate Subcommittee No. 3 Chair**.

The legislators strong statements of support came as #CACantWait Coalition members CHEAC, SEIU California, and Public Health Advocates (PHA) were joined on a panel by Kim Saruwatari, President of County Health Executives Association of California and Public Health Director of Riverside County, to provide an overview on the implementation of the Future of Public Health Funding and challenges with workforce recruitment and retention.

"We now have an opportunity to prepare so that we do not repeat the same mistakes in the future. Because there will inevitably be future emergencies," **Oussama Mokeddem, Director of State Policy for Public Health Advocates** told the committee. "We can be more prepared if we heed the lessons of COVID-19. It's now our job to keep up the investment that we originally projected for us to achieve our goals."

Ms. Saruwatari's testimony highlighted long-standing challenges filling their local public health laboratory director position and other public health professionals like public health nurses, noting the lack of workforce pipeline investments to develop and train future leaders for open positions. **"We are struggling to find qualified candidates. If we truly want to build our public health infrastructure and be able to recruit the talent that the public deserves, we need to build our pipeline of qualified, skilled, and passionate individuals."**

Throughout the hearing, #CACantWait members stressed the urgency of maintaining PublicHERO investments to prepare for the next public health threat before it hits, warning now is not the time to fallback on progress.

"The past few years have served as a brutal reminder to all of us that how we fund public health can fuel or dismantle public health progress," said **Beth Malinowski, Governmental Affairs Advocate for SEIU-California**. "Now is not the time to backtrack on our commitments even before they've begun. State and County public health cannot be successful when we play a game of cat and mouse with workforce funding."

#CACantWait coalition members will continue to advocate for preserving PublicHERO investments as the budget process continues. Our message is clear: disinvestment in public health infrastructure and workforce left us understaffed and underprepared to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and disproportionately exposed vulnerable communities.

PUBLIC HEALTH LEADERS URGE LEGISLATURE TO REJECT GOVERNOR'S PROPOSAL TO SLASH \$49.8M IN PUBLICHERO FUNDING

In a [CalMatters op-ed earlier this month](#), Kim Saruwatari, President of County Health Executives Association of California (CHEAC) and Public Health Director of Riverside County and Dr. Nancy Williams, President of the Health Officers Association of California and Public Health Officer of El Dorado County, urged the legislature to reject Governor Newsom's proposed cuts to the Public Health Equity and Readiness Opportunity (PublicHERO) initiative funding that was enacted in last year's budget. As California's COVID-19 state of emergency came to an end, the officials argued California can't let down its guard; the lesson of the pandemic, they said, is that California must invest in readiness before the next crisis.

"In California and elsewhere, public health defenses had been weakened by decades of disinvestment, which made responding to the pandemic difficult while longstanding barriers to health exacted an [inequitable toll in the most vulnerable communities](#). Yet on the eve of the scheduled end to the state of emergency, Gov. Gavin Newsom [proposed cutting](#) \$49.8 million dedicated to rebuilding California's local public health workforce."

"While the state wisely decided last year to provide annual, ongoing funding to rebuild California's weakened public health infrastructure, achieving that goal won't be possible without providing the planned boost of one-time workforce development funds to bolster a pipeline of laboratory directors, epidemiologists, microbiologists and other skilled professionals," Kim Saruwatari and Dr. Nancy Williams wrote.

The PublicHERO initiative provides one-time investments to bolster a pipeline of skilled public health laboratorians, microbiologists, epidemiologists and other skilled public health professionals that California needs to maintain readiness.

Around the state, local public health officials continue to warn that proposed state budget cuts to public health workforce training and development programs could leave vulnerable Californians exposed to existing and emerging public health threats, exacerbate health disparities that have worsened over the last three years, and jeopardize progress made during the pandemic to prioritize health equity.



CHEAC
Improving the Health of all Californians

1127 11th Street, Suite 806
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 327-7540